

CONTOUR FARMING

Conservation Practice Job Sheet

PA330



DEFINITION

Contour farming is performed on sloping cropland by following the natural contours when tilling and harvesting the soil, planting, and cultivating. It also includes following established grades of terraces or diversions.

PURPOSE

Contour farming is cost effective practice when properly planned and applied. The purpose of this practice is to reduce erosion, control runoff water, and increase moisture infiltration.

Properly design contour farming will utilize furrows, ridges and plant vegetation to slow runoff and allow more moisture to infiltrate. This practice is usually planned in conjunction with other practices needed for support in the event runoff exceeds the carrying capacity of the contours.

WHERE USED

This practice applies on sloping land where crops are grown.

Contour farming is most effective on slopes between 2 and 10 percent. This practice is not well suited to rolling topography having a high degree of slope irregularity because of the difficulty meeting row grade criteria.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Contour farming is normally established as part of resource management system for a conservation management unit. They are concurrently applied with other practices, such as residue management and conservation crop rotation. Contours are determined by such variables as slope, soil type, field conditions, climate and erosion potential.

When planning for wildlife, concentrated flows from contouring shall be delivered to grassed waterways, field borders and other stable outlets or areas.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Where terraces, diversions, or contour buffer strips are not present, establish some type of marker or mark to retain the location of the base line(s) used to establish the system.

Farming operations should begin on the contour baselines and proceed both up and down the slope in a parallel pattern. The center portion between the baselines (including) point rows will generally be planted from the outside toward the center.

Site-specific requirements are listed on the specifications sheet. Additional provisions are entered on the job sketch sheet.

Specifications are prepared in accordance with the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide. See practice standard Contour Farming, code 330.

If needed, an aerial view or a side view of the practice can be shown below. Other relevant information, complementary practices and measures, and additional specifications may be included.

Additional Specifications and Notes:

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